

SKILLS!

Ryan Jordan's favorite off-season training to transform how you feel on your summer backpacking trips:

1. Box Steps

Use a stair or a rock or buy a 12" or 16" box step. Start with both feet on the ground. Lift your target leg to the top of the box, then step up so both feet are on top. Drop your non-target leg down to the ground, then the target leg. That's one rep. Continue the reps on the same target leg. Do this 3X/week, one leg at a time, each set alternating target legs

- December and January - no weight, 30x reps
- February and March - 20 lb pack, 30x reps
- April and May - 40 lb pack, 15x reps

Caveat: don't do it above your aerobic threshold (AeT) heart rate - go slower as needed. The aerobic threshold heart rate is exceeded when you start having to breathe through your mouth. Stick with nose breathing, you'll build better muscular endurance that way - and that's what you need for backpacking.

2. Water Carries

Go to the base of a big hill. Fill your pack with water. Hike up to the top of the hill, but stay below your AeT. Empty the water at the top. Hike back down, take it easy, save your knees. Fill up with more water at the bottom. Use a creek or jugs you brought in your car. Repeat. Do this 2x/week.

- December and January - no water
- February and March - 15 lb of water
- April and May - 30 lb of water

3. Easy vs. Hard Runs/Hikes

Stay at least 10-20 beats per minute below your AeT. These are recovery and rest run/hikes, and should be easy and fun. Limit elevation gain.

- December and January - 20 to 30 minutes, 3x/week. No other running, but easy hikes (20+ bpm below your AeT) are OK.
- February and March - 30 to 45 minutes, 2x/week. Add 1x/week of harder hiking/running (-10 to +10 bpm within your AeT) up to an hour.
- April and May - 45 to 60 minutes, 1x/week. Add 2x/week of harder hiking/running (-10 to +10 bpm within your AeT) up to an hour.